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NSC BRIEFING

17 May 1955

SOUTH VIETNAM

- I. Diem moving cautiously to consolidate military and political gains.
 - A. Personally supervised Army takeover of Imperial Guard at Dalat on 16 May, which has eliminated last source of potential organized support for Bao Dai.
 - B. Vietnamese Army is now encircling Binh Xuyen remnant (1,500 in marshes south of Saigon).
- II. Diem "studying with interest" joint US-French plans for integration of sect troops (Hoa Hao, Cao Dai).
 - A. Cao Dai troops already rallied to Diem, but most Hoa Hao troops remain dissident.
 - B. Actual absorption of latter will probably involve much haggling and bribery.
 - C. Diem has complained to Ely of reports that French military are still in contact with Hoa Hao dissidents.
 - D. Meanwhile, Cao Dai Pope is reportedly trying to assert authority over sect's forces. Diem believes French encouraging him, as potential focus of anti-government activity.
- III. Diem has instructed Information Minister to curb anti-French tendencies in local press.
 - A. He still regards heavy concentration of French troops in Saigon area as provocative.

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B. Present disposition of French forces is result of orders by C-in-C (Ely), who--as commander in chief in South Vietnam--also has paper command of UNLV.

-- AS BROTHER LUYEN SAYS HE WILL --
C. Should Dien ^A demand that French troops remaining in Vietnam be stationed at 17th Parallel truce line, action would call into question present command structure.

IV. Meanwhile, Dien engaged in diplomatic efforts directed toward:

A. Prodding truce commission to obtain extension of deadline for refugee movement (which ended 13 May).

B. Holding US-UK-French-Vietnamese conference in Saigon to demonstrate Vietnam's international standing.

1. French have indicated willingness, provided conference consists of local representatives.
2. Australian minister in Saigon thinks he should participate if UK does.

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